



## Senate

General Assembly

**File No. 315**

February Session, 2014

Substitute Senate Bill No. 106

*Senate, April 3, 2014*

The Committee on Human Services reported through SEN. SLOSSBERG of the 14th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

***AN ACT CONCERNING IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES  
THROUGH EDUCATION AND ENSURING SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATES.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1       Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2014*) (a) The Commissioner of  
2       Social Services and the Labor Commissioner shall permit a recipient of  
3       temporary family assistance to take education courses as part of the  
4       requirements of the recipient's employability plan, established  
5       pursuant to section 17b-689c of the general statutes, provided: (1) The  
6       state complies with federal work participation requirements for the  
7       employment services program established pursuant to section 17b-  
8       688c of the general statutes, and (2) the education courses are  
9       approved pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

10       (b) To the extent permissible under federal law, the Labor  
11       Commissioner, in consultation with the Commissioner of Social  
12       Services, may approve education courses as required employment  
13       activities for a recipient of temporary family assistance. Education  
14       courses that may be approved include, but are not limited to: (1) Two-

15 year or four-year college degree programs, and (2) high school  
16 graduate equivalency degree or basic education programs for  
17 recipients otherwise ineligible to enroll in such programs during their  
18 first twenty weekly hours of required employment activities.

19 (c) The Labor Commissioner, in consultation with the Commissioner  
20 of Social Services, shall implement policies and procedures to establish  
21 (1) which programs may qualify as an approved employment activity,  
22 and (2) enrollment and academic requirements for students who are  
23 recipients of temporary family assistance. The Labor Commissioner  
24 shall implement such policies and procedures while in the process of  
25 adopting such policies and procedures in regulation form, provided  
26 the Labor Commissioner provides notice of intent to adopt the  
27 regulations in accordance with section 4-168 of the general statutes not  
28 later than twenty days after implementing such policies and  
29 procedures. Policies and procedures implemented pursuant to this  
30 subsection shall be valid until the time final regulations are effective.

31 (d) Nothing in this section shall be construed as requiring the state  
32 to pay for the tuition of any recipient of temporary family assistance.

33 Sec. 2. Section 10-222d of the general statutes is repealed and the  
34 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2014*):

35 (a) As used in this section, sections 10-222g to 10-222i, inclusive, as  
36 amended by this act, and section 10-222k, as amended by this act:

37 (1) "Bullying" means (A) the repeated use by one or more students  
38 of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying,  
39 directed at or referring to another student attending school in the same  
40 school district, or (B) a physical act or gesture by one or more students  
41 repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same  
42 school district, that: (i) Causes physical or emotional harm to such  
43 student or damage to such student's property, (ii) places such student  
44 in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or  
45 her property, (iii) creates a hostile educational environment at school  
46 for such student, or (iv) [infringes on the rights of such student at

47 school, or (v)] substantially disrupts the education process or the  
48 orderly operation of a school. "Bullying" shall include, but not be  
49 limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act  
50 or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating  
51 characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin,  
52 gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression,  
53 socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental,  
54 physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with  
55 an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of  
56 such characteristics;

57 (2) "Cyberbullying" means any act of bullying through the use of the  
58 Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone  
59 or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications;

60 (3) "Mobile electronic device" means any hand-held or other  
61 portable electronic equipment capable of providing data  
62 communication between two or more individuals, including, but not  
63 limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital  
64 assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a  
65 video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital  
66 images are taken or transmitted;

67 (4) "Electronic communication" means any transfer of signs, signals,  
68 writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted  
69 in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic  
70 or photo-optical system;

71 (5) ["Hostile environment"] "Hostile educational environment"  
72 means a situation in which [bullying among students] the use of  
73 communication or physical acts or gestures is sufficiently severe or  
74 pervasive to [alter the conditions of the school climate] interfere with a  
75 student's education;

76 (6) "Outside of the school setting" means at a location, activity or  
77 program that is not school related, or through the use of an electronic  
78 device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned, leased or used

79 by a local or regional board of education;

80 (7) "School employee" means (A) a teacher, substitute teacher,  
81 school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor,  
82 psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional  
83 or coach employed by a local or regional board of education or  
84 working in a public elementary, middle or high school; or (B) any  
85 other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has  
86 regular contact with students and who provides services to or on  
87 behalf of students enrolled in a public elementary, middle or high  
88 school, pursuant to a contract with the local or regional board of  
89 education; and

90 (8) "School climate" means the quality and character of school life  
91 with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the  
92 school community between and among students and adults.

93 (b) Each local and regional board of education shall develop and  
94 implement a safe school climate plan to address the existence of  
95 bullying in its schools. Such plan shall: (1) Enable students to  
96 anonymously report acts of bullying to school employees and require  
97 students and the parents or guardians of students to be notified  
98 [annually] at the beginning of each school year of the process by which  
99 students may make such reports, (2) enable the parents or guardians of  
100 students to file written reports of suspected bullying, (3) require school  
101 employees who witness acts [of] that may constitute bullying or  
102 receive reports of acts that may constitute bullying to orally notify the  
103 safe school climate specialist, described in section 10-222k, as amended  
104 by this act, or another school administrator if the safe school climate  
105 specialist is unavailable, not later than one school day after such school  
106 employee witnesses or receives a report of [bullying] such acts, and to  
107 file a written report not later than two school days after making such  
108 oral report, (4) require the safe school climate specialist to investigate  
109 or supervise the investigation of all reports of acts that may constitute  
110 bullying and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly  
111 after receipt of any written reports made under this section, (5) require

112 the safe school climate specialist to review any anonymous reports,  
113 except that no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of  
114 an anonymous report, (6) [include a prevention and intervention]  
115 require a school-based bullying intervention and school climate  
116 improvement strategy, as defined by section 10-222g, as amended by  
117 this act, for school employees to deal with bullying, (7) provide for the  
118 inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying,  
119 (8) require each school to notify the parents or guardians of students  
120 who commit any verified acts of bullying and the parents or guardians  
121 of students against whom such acts were directed not later than forty-  
122 eight hours after the completion of the investigation described in  
123 subdivision (4) of this subsection, (9) require each school to invite the  
124 parents or guardians of a student [who commits any verified act of  
125 bullying and the parents or guardians of the student] against whom  
126 such act was directed to a meeting to communicate to such parents or  
127 guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety  
128 of the student against whom such act was directed and policies and  
129 procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying, (10) require  
130 each school to invite the parents or guardians of a student who  
131 commits any verified act of bullying to a meeting, separate and distinct  
132 from the meeting required in subdivision (9) of this subsection, to  
133 discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent  
134 further acts of bullying, (11) establish a procedure for each school to  
135 document and maintain records relating to reports and investigations  
136 of bullying in such school and to maintain a list of the number of  
137 verified acts of bullying in such school and make such list available for  
138 public inspection, and annually report such number to the Department  
139 of Education, and in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner  
140 of Education, [(11)] (12) direct the development of case-by-case  
141 interventions for addressing repeated incidents of bullying against a  
142 single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the  
143 same individual that may include both counseling and discipline,  
144 [(12)] (13) prohibit discrimination and retaliation against an individual  
145 who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying, [(13)]  
146 (14) direct the development of student safety support plans for

147 students against whom an act of bullying was directed that address  
148 safety measures the school will take to protect such students against  
149 further acts of bullying, [(14)] (15) require the principal of a school, or  
150 the principal's designee, to notify a school resource officer or the  
151 appropriate local law enforcement agency when such principal, or the  
152 principal's designee, believes that any acts [of bullying] may constitute  
153 criminal conduct, [(15)] (16) prohibit bullying (A) on school grounds, at  
154 a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program  
155 whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus  
156 or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of  
157 education, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic  
158 mobile device owned, leased or used by the local or regional board of  
159 education, and (B) outside of the school setting if such bullying (i)  
160 creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom  
161 such bullying was directed, or (ii) [infringes on the rights of the  
162 student against whom such bullying was directed at school, or (iii)]  
163 substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of  
164 a school, [(16)] (17) require, at the beginning of each school year, each  
165 school to provide all school employees with a written or electronic  
166 copy of the school district's safe school climate plan, along with a  
167 written or electronic copy of school-based bullying intervention and  
168 school climate improvement strategy developed pursuant to section  
169 10-222k, as amended by this act, and [(17)] (18) require that all school  
170 employees annually complete the training described in section 10-220a  
171 or section 10-222j. The notification required pursuant to subdivision (8)  
172 of this subsection and the invitation required pursuant to subdivision  
173 (9) of this subsection shall include a description of the response of  
174 school employees to such acts and any consequences that may result  
175 from the commission of further acts of bullying.

176 (c) Not later than January 1, 2012, each local and regional board of  
177 education shall approve the safe school climate plan developed  
178 pursuant to this section and submit such plan to the Department of  
179 Education. Not later than thirty calendar days after approval of such  
180 plan by the local or regional board of education, the board shall make  
181 such plan available on the board's and each individual school in the

182 school district's Internet web site and ensure that such plan is included  
183 in the school district's publication of the rules, procedures and  
184 standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks.

185 (d) On and after July 1, 2012, and [biennially] annually thereafter,  
186 each local and regional board of education shall require each school in  
187 the district to complete an assessment using the school climate  
188 assessment instruments, including surveys, approved and  
189 disseminated by the Department of Education pursuant to section 10-  
190 222h. Each local and regional board of education shall collect the  
191 school climate assessments for each school in the district and submit  
192 such school climate assessments to the department.

193 (e) For the purpose of collecting and sharing school-based best  
194 practices or successful strategies to improve school climate, not later  
195 than January 1, 2016, and every two years thereafter, each local and  
196 regional board of education shall update the safe school climate plan  
197 developed pursuant to subsection (c) of this section and submit such  
198 plan to the Department of Education, to include summaries of school-  
199 based bullying intervention and school climate improvement strategies  
200 along with district-wide climate improvement initiatives and anti-  
201 bullying policies.

202 Sec. 3. Section 10-222g of the general statutes is repealed and the  
203 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2014*):

204 For the purposes of section 10-222d, as amended by this act, the  
205 term ["prevention and intervention strategy"] "school-based bullying  
206 intervention and school climate improvement strategy" may include,  
207 but is not limited to, (1) implementation of a positive behavioral  
208 interventions and supports process or another evidence-based model  
209 approach for safe school climate or for the prevention of bullying  
210 identified by the Department of Education, (2) school rules prohibiting  
211 bullying, harassment and intimidation and establishing appropriate  
212 consequences for those who engage in such acts, (3) adequate adult  
213 supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other  
214 specific areas where bullying is likely to occur, (4) inclusion of grade-

215 appropriate bullying education and prevention curricula in  
216 kindergarten through high school, (5) individual interventions with  
217 the bully, parents and school employees, and interventions with the  
218 bullied child, parents and school employees, (6) school-wide training  
219 related to safe school climate, (7) student peer training, education and  
220 support, [and] (8) promotion of parent involvement in bullying  
221 prevention through individual or team participation in meetings,  
222 trainings and individual interventions, and (9) culturally competent  
223 school-based curriculum focusing on social-emotional learning, self-  
224 awareness and self-regulation. Funding for the school-based bullying  
225 intervention and school climate improvement strategy may originate  
226 from public, private, federal or philanthropic sources.

227 Sec. 4. Section 10-222k of the 2014 supplement to the general statutes  
228 is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*  
229 *1, 2014*):

230 (a) For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school  
231 year thereafter, the superintendent of each local or regional board of  
232 education shall appoint, from among existing school district staff, a  
233 district safe school climate coordinator. The district safe school climate  
234 coordinator shall: (1) Be responsible for implementing the district's safe  
235 school climate plan, developed pursuant to section 10-222d, as  
236 amended by this act, (2) collaborate with the safe school climate  
237 specialists, described in subsection (b) of this section, the board of  
238 education for the district and the superintendent of schools of the  
239 school district to prevent, identify and respond to bullying in the  
240 schools of the district, (3) provide data and information, in  
241 collaboration with the superintendent of schools of the district, to the  
242 Department of Education regarding bullying, in accordance with the  
243 provisions of subsection (b) of section 10-222d, as amended by this act,  
244 and subsection (a) of section 10-222h, and (4) meet with the safe school  
245 climate specialists at least twice during the school year to discuss  
246 issues relating to bullying and school climate in the school district and  
247 to make recommendations concerning amendments to the district's  
248 safe school climate plan.



249 (b) For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school  
250 year thereafter, the principal of each school, or the principal's designee,  
251 shall serve as the safe school climate specialist and shall (1) investigate  
252 or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying in the school  
253 in accordance with the district's safe school climate plan, (2) collect and  
254 maintain records of reports and investigations of bullying in the  
255 school, and (3) act as the primary school official responsible for  
256 preventing, identifying and responding to reports of bullying in the  
257 school.

258 (c) (1) For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school  
259 year thereafter, the principal of each school shall establish a committee  
260 or designate at least one existing committee in the school to be  
261 responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and  
262 addressing issues relating to bullying in the school. Such committee  
263 shall include at least one parent or guardian of a student enrolled in  
264 the school appointed by the school principal.

265 (2) Any such committee shall [:(A) Receive copies of completed  
266 reports following investigations of bullying, (B) identify and address  
267 patterns of bullying among students in the school, (C) implement the  
268 provisions of the school security and safety plan, developed pursuant  
269 to section 10-222m, regarding the collection, evaluation and reporting  
270 of information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening  
271 behavior that may not meet the definition of bullying, (D) review and  
272 amend school policies relating to bullying, (E)] receive and analyze the  
273 results of the school climate assessments completed pursuant to  
274 subsection (d) of section 10-222d, as amended by this act, and other  
275 reported data in the aggregate on incidents of bullying, collected in  
276 accordance with the provisions of subsection (b) of section 10-222d, as  
277 amended by this act, and use such data to (A) identify patterns of  
278 bullying among students in the school, (B) monitor the progress of  
279 school climate improvement and identify any strengths and  
280 weaknesses at the school with respect to school climate improvement,  
281 (C) develop, in consultation with the safe school climate specialist, a  
282 school-based bullying intervention and school climate improvement

283 strategy, providing annual recommendations to the school climate  
 284 coordinator on improving school climate, (D) review and make  
 285 recommendations to the district safe school climate coordinator  
 286 regarding the district's safe school climate plan based on issues and  
 287 experiences specific to the school, [(F)] (E) educate students, school  
 288 employees and parents and guardians of students on issues relating to  
 289 bullying [, (G) collaborate with the district safe school climate  
 290 coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying, in accordance  
 291 with the provisions of subsection (b) of section 10-222d and subsection  
 292 (a) of section 10-222h, and (H)] and school climate, and (F) perform any  
 293 other duties as determined by the school principal that are related to  
 294 the [prevention, identification and response to school bullying for the  
 295 school] school-based bullying intervention and school climate  
 296 improvement strategy.

297 (3) Any parent or guardian serving as a member of any such  
 298 committee shall not participate in the activities described in  
 299 [subparagraphs (A) to (C), inclusive, of] subdivision (2) of this  
 300 subsection or any other activity that may compromise the  
 301 confidentiality of a student.

302 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2014*) Within available appropriations,  
 303 the Office of Early Childhood, in collaboration with the State  
 304 Department of Education, may offer a competitive grant for up to three  
 305 alliance school districts to develop and implement a strategy to  
 306 promote the social and emotional well-being and health of preschool  
 307 children from age three to children in third grade, with a focus on  
 308 instructional tools and family engagement. Funds for this grant may  
 309 originate from public, private, federal or philanthropic sources.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2014</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2014</i>	10-222d
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2014</i>	10-222g
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2014</i>	10-222k

Sec. 5	July 1, 2014	New section
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***Statement of Legislative Commissioners:***

In section 2(b)(6), "[include a prevention and] require a school-based bullying prevention and school climate intervention strategy" was changed to "[include a prevention and intervention] require a school-based bullying intervention and school climate improvement strategy" for consistency with the defined term in section 3 and statutory drafting style. In section 3(9), "this strategy" was changed to "the school-based bullying intervention and school climate improvement strategy" for clarity and consistency with the defined term.

**HS**      *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

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### **OFA Fiscal Note**

#### **State Impact:**

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 15 \$	FY 16 \$
Early Childhood, Off.	GF - Cost	Potential	Potential

**Municipal Impact:** None

#### **Explanation**

Section 1 codifies current practice related to countable Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) employment activities, which has no fiscal impact.

Sections 2 through 4 make changes to school-based bullying and safe school climate plans, which have no fiscal impact as they are procedural in nature.

Section 5 could result in a fiscal impact associated with allowing the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to offer a competitive grant for up to three alliance school districts. The grant(s) would support the development and implementation of a strategy to promote the social and emotional well-being and health of preschool children. The bill does not specify the amount of grant funding that should be available for these purposes.

#### **The Out Years**

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

**OLR Bill Analysis****sSB 106*****AN ACT CONCERNING IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH EDUCATION AND ENSURING SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATES.*****SUMMARY:**

This bill (1) makes a variety of changes with regard to the responsibilities of schools and school districts to address bullying, (2) allows educational courses to qualify as a Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) work activity, and (3) establishes a competitive early childhood grant program.

Concerning bullying, it:

1. narrows how bullying is defined;
2. requires separate meetings with the parents or guardians of a bullying victim and those of his or her assailants, rather than a combined meeting;
3. requires school boards to update their safe school climate plans by January 1, 2016 and every two years thereafter;
4. requires board to assess their school climates annually, rather than every two years;
5. modifies the roles of school committees that are responsible for developing a safe school climate; and
6. makes related minor and conforming changes.

The bill requires the social services (DSS) and labor (DOL) commissioners to permit a Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) recipient to take educational courses as part of the requirements of her

or his employability plan. They must do so as long as (1) the state complies with federal work participation requirements for the employment services program and (2) the education courses are approved by the DOL commissioner. The bill specifies the types of courses the commissioner can approve.

The bill requires the DOL commissioner, in consultation with the DSS commissioner, to implement policies and procedures to (1) establish which programs may qualify as an approved employment activity and (2) enrollment and academic requirements for students who receive TFA benefits.

The bill cannot be construed as requiring the state to pay the tuition of any TFA recipient.

Finally, the bill allows the Office of Early Childhood to offer, within available appropriations, a competitive grant for up to three alliance school districts to develop and implement a strategy to promote the social and emotional well-being and health of children from age three to third grade. If the office offers this grant, it must do so in collaboration with the State Department of Education (SDE). The program must focus on instructional tools and family engagement. Funds for this grant may come from public, private, federal, or philanthropic sources.

Alliance districts are the 30 lowest-performing school districts, as identified by the education commissioner.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

## **BULLYING**

### ***Definitions***

The bill excludes from the definition of bullying the infringement of a student's rights.

Under current law, bullying also includes cases where the harmful or damaging behavior creates a "hostile environment" at school for the

bullied student. The bill instead refers to a “hostile educational environment.” Under current law, a “hostile environment” is a situation where bullying among students is sufficiently serious or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school’s climate. The bill defines “hostile educational environment” as a situation in which the use of communication or physical acts or gestures is sufficiently severe or pervasive to interfere with a student’s education.

### ***Safe School Climate Plans***

By law, each local and regional board of education must develop and implement a safe school climate plan to address bullying in its schools. Under current law, the plan must require a school to invite the parents or guardians of (1) a student who commits a verified act of bullying and (2) the bully’s victim to a meeting to discuss the measures the school is taking to ensure the victim’s safety and prevent further bullying. The bill instead requires that the bully’s parents or guardians be invited to a meeting, separate from the one held with the victim’s parents or guardians, to discuss specific interventions the school has undertaken to prevent further bullying.

Under current law, the plan must require a school principal or his or her designee to notify the appropriate law enforcement agency if he or she believes that the bullying constitutes criminal conduct. The bill alternatively allows the principal or designee to notify a school resource officer.

The bill requires that the annual notice that must be provided under the plan to students and their parents on how students can anonymously report bullying be provided at the beginning of each school year.

The bill requires each board, by January 1, 2016, and every two years thereafter, to update its plan and submit it to the Department of Education. The submission must also include (1) summaries of school-based bullying intervention and school climate improvement strategies, (2) district-wide climate improvement initiatives, and (3)

anti-bullying policies. The board must do this to collect and share school-based best practices or successful strategies to improve school climate.

### ***Bullying Intervention and School Climate Improvement Strategy***

Under current law, the plan must include a “prevention and intervention strategy.” The bill renames this document the “school-based bullying intervention and school climate improvement strategy.” It allows the strategy to include, in addition to the already authorized components, culturally competent school-based curricula on social-emotional learning, self-awareness, and self-regulation. By law, schools must provide all school employees with a copy of the district’s safe school climate plan at the beginning at the school year. The bill additionally requires schools to provide employees with a written or electronic copy of the district’s strategy, also at the beginning at the school year.

The bill allows funding for the strategy to come from public, private, federal, or philanthropic sources.

### ***Assessment***

The bill requires boards to annually, rather than biennially, require each of their schools to complete an assessment using the school climate assessment instruments, including surveys, approved and disseminated by the department. By law, each board must collect the assessments for each of its schools and submit them to the SDE.

### ***School Meetings and Committees***

By law, each superintendent must appoint a district safe school climate coordinator from among existing staff. The coordinator must meet with the safe school climate specialists (principals or their designees) at least twice during the school year to discuss issues relating to bullying. The bill requires that these meetings also address the school’s climate.

By law, each principal must establish or designate a committee to develop and foster a safe school climate and address issues relating to



bullying. Under current law, among other things, the committee must:

1. receive copies of completed reports following investigations of bullying,
2. implement the provisions of the school security and safety plan,
3. review and amend school policies relating to bullying, and
4. collaborate with the district coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying.

Instead of the above responsibilities, the bill requires the committee to receive and analyze the results of the school climate assessments and other aggregated reported data on bullying incidents. The committee must use this data to:

1. monitor the progress of school climate improvement and identify any strengths and weaknesses at the school with respect to school climate improvement;
2. develop, in consultation with the safe school climate specialist, a school-based bullying intervention and school climate improvement strategy, and
3. provide annual recommendations to the school climate coordinator on improving school climate.

The committee must also use this data with regard to its existing responsibilities to (1) identify patterns of bullying among students in the school; (2) review and make recommendations to the district coordinator regarding its safe school climate plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school; (3) educate students, their parents and guardians, and school employees on issues relating to bullying (the bill also requires that the education address school climate).

Under current law, the committee must perform other duties as determined by the principal that are related to preventing, identifying, and responding to bullying in the school. The bill instead requires the

committee to use the data to perform other duties as determined by the principal that are related to the school-based bullying intervention and school climate improvement strategy

### **TAKING COURSES TO MEET TFA REQUIREMENTS**

Unless they are exempt, able-bodied adults in households receiving TFA must engage in work activity as a condition of receiving ongoing TFA. Federal law allows specified educational programs to count as work activity.

By law, DSS must assess each person found eligible for time-limited TFA benefits to develop an employability plan for him or her. DSS must then refer the person to DOL which, with the regional workforce development board, must finalize the plan and identify the services the person needs to fulfill the plan (CGS § 17b-689c).

Under the bill, the DSS and DOL commissioners must permit a TFA recipient to take education courses as part of the requirements of the recipient's employability plan as long as (1) the state complies with federal work participation requirements for the state's employment services program and (2) the education courses are approved under the bill.

The bill allows the DOL commissioner, in consultation with the DSS commissioner, approve education courses as required employment activities for a TFA recipient to the extent permissible under federal law. Eligible courses can include: (1) two- or four-year college degree programs and (2) high school graduate equivalency degree or basic education programs for recipients otherwise ineligible to enroll in these programs during their first 20 hours per week of required employment activities.

The bill requires the DOL commissioner, in consultation with the DSS commissioner, to implement policies and procedures to establish (1) which programs may qualify as an approved employment activity, and (2) enrollment and academic requirements for students who are TFA recipients. The labor commissioner must implement these policies

and procedures while adopting them as regulations, as long as he provides notice of intent to adopt the regulations not later than 20 days after implementing the interim policies and procedures.

The interim policies and procedures are valid until the final regulations go into are effect.

The bill cannot be construed as requiring the state to pay the tuition of any TFA recipient.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 18      Nay 0      (03/18/2014)